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CIA did have link with dissident

By Peter Wilsher

ANATOLY Shcharansky, whose trial opens in Moscow tomorrow, did have a CIA connection—though he may never have known this until after his arrest. Despite President Carter's public avowal that the prominent dissident was in no way linked to American intelligence, the evidence that the Soviet prosecution presents will show:

- that Shcharansky did co-operate with a US agent—a Soviet neurosurgeon, recruited by the CIA early in 1975.
- that Shcharansky helped this agent to collect information on the way the USSR used Western equipment to keep tabs on members of the Human Rights movement.

What may or may not come out at the trial is that the neurosurgeon was really a KGB man, persuaded by the offer of his father's release from prison to act as a double agent and provocateur. It is now clear that through this "CIA" ruse the KGB succeeded in compromising large parts of the Human Rights organisation inside the Soviet Union.

The detailed story of the US ineptitude which allowed Moscow to entangle Shcharansky in the toils of alleged "espionage"—and could well, under Soviet law, cost him his life—has been ferreted out by American journalist Edward Jay Epstein, author of a series of books on the Kennedy assassination and the international intelligence community. His findings, under the title The War Within the CIA, are due to appear at length in the August issue of the US magazine, Commentary.

He traces the beginning of the Shcharansky tragedy to the great CIA upheavals of 1974 when the controversial agency was under intense Congressional and newspaper scrutiny. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the CIA had found it almost impossible to find acceptable agents inside the Soviet Union. This was largely due to the CIA's super-suspicious counter-intelligence head, James Angleton, who believed, with some justification, that any Soviet volunteer must almost certainly have been put up by the KGB.

In 1974, however, leaks about the CIA's clandestine activities forced Angleton's resignation and this block was removed. Under the new director, William Colby, the agency went rapidly ahead to build a Soviet network.

Early in 1975 news came through of a major success in Moscow. The catch in question was Sanya L. Lipavsky, a 42-year-old brain surgeon, of Jewish descent, employed by the Drivers Licence Bureau in Moscow as a medital examiner.

Lipavsky was already heavily involved with the Jewish dissident movement. Indeed, he shared a room with Shcharansky and had ingratiated himself with other activists, including Vladimir Slepak, Vitaly Rubin and Alexsandr Lerner. Two years later, after he had succeeded in implicating many of his contacts in serious offences against Soviet law, he denounced them and described his CIA involvement in an article in Isvestia. Panic investigations revealed to the Americans that he had been working for the KGB the whole time.

It quickly became apparent in Washington that Lipavsky had been a triply-successful plant—entrapping Human Rights leaders, compromising the whole dissident movement and fatally blurring the edges of President Carter's moral crusade. The Soviets clearly held a trump card.

According to Epstein, the Carter administration has been forced to enter into secret negotiations with the Soviets to make the best deal possible to save face and temper the wind to Shcharansky and any future victims.

But whatever the outcome, Lipavsky's original recruitment seems inexplicable. He had no access to secrets, no obvious motiv to risk his life for the CIA, and a known involvement in a movement whose integrity and credibility were very important to the United States. He may well turn out to have been the worst buy American intelligence has ever made.

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